



As a steward of our nation's coastal and marine environments, NOAA addresses immediate and long-term environmental threats through its Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R). Scientists are on call around-the-clock to provide the U.S. Coast Guard and other emergency responders with critical information to help minimize environmental damage caused by oil and hazardous chemical spills. Environmental experts assess ecosystems compromised by historic or ongoing contamination and work with other organizations to conduct remediation, restoration, and monitoring of critical natural resources.

Protecting and Restoring Louisiana's Coastal and Marine Areas

NOAA trust resources in Louisiana include the largest area of coastal wetlands in North America. Approximately three million acres of marsh and swamp in Louisiana support nearly one-third of the shrimp and oysters harvested within the continental United States. Of the nation's oil production, 18% comes from Louisiana. Within a 10 year period, one-fifth of the total oil spills in the nation occurred within Louisiana waters. The cumulative impact of oil spills and hazardous chemical releases on fish, wildlife, and the environment can harm the industries and communities that depend on these natural resources. The state map on the reverse page shows key response and restoration activities in the past year.

Emergency Response

In 2005, NOAA scientists and other emergency response specialists assisted the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in responding to oil and chemical incidents caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. NOAA provided information on flood water levels and coordinated satellite imagery and maps to support search and rescue efforts. In addition, NOAA supplied scientific and environmental support during the response to more than 100 oil spills, over 1,000 stranded vessels, and the recovery of more than 10,000 hazardous material containers in the wetlands and waterways of southeastern Louisiana alone.



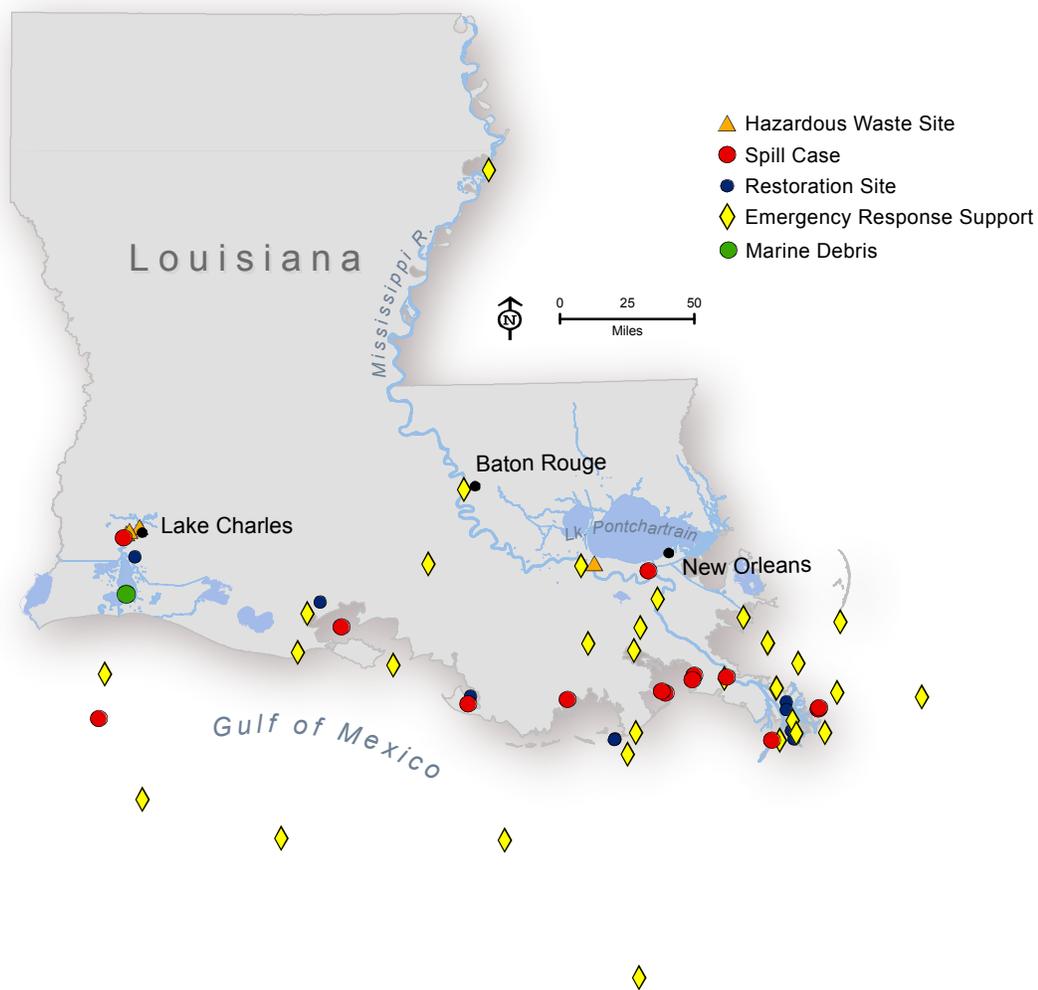
Oil release from pipeline damaged by Hurricane Katrina in Nairn, Louisiana

Assessment and Restoration

Days after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, assessment specialists were on the scene identifying, assessing, and prioritizing over 1,000 reported releases of hazardous materials and more than 400 sunken vessels. Assessment specialists led field efforts in affected parishes to collect information on environmental injuries and identify restoration projects to mitigate future environmental impacts. Field efforts were focused on ten locations in the Mississippi River corridor where over eight million gallons of oil were cumulatively discharged. NOAA is participating as a full partner with other trustees to develop a regional assessment and restoration approach for natural resources damaged by discharges of oil and hazardous substances following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Marine Debris

NOAA conducts surveys to identify marine debris hazards that threaten viable commercial fishing grounds and navigation. NOAA also provides critical data to support debris removal in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Maps depicting debris locations and navigational obstructions are now available to regional stakeholders at gulfofmexico.marinedebris.noaa.gov.



Research

NOAA collaborates with other federal, state, and local programs to develop innovative approaches to protecting marine and estuarine environments through research and synthesis of information. The Coastal Response Research Center (CRRC) brings together the resources of a research-oriented university and the field expertise of OR&R to conduct and oversee basic and applied research, conduct outreach, and encourage strategic partnerships in spill response, assessment, and restoration.

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment

**For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration,
please call (301) 713-2989 or visit our Web site at
response.restoration.noaa.gov**

Banner photo of Capitol Lake, Baton Rouge, courtesy of Maud Walsh

